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Imagining Okinawa:

Japanese pop musicians and Okinawan music

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Abstract

Since the early 1970s, Okinawan styles have become popular throughout Japan and, to some extent, the rest of the world. This music has been performed both by native Okinawan musicians, and also by musicians from the Japanese mainland, drawn partly by the exoticness of this 'Japanese other'. While modern-day Okinawan music has been considered from the perspective of Okinawan identity within a Japanese framework, the role of Japanese musicians in the recent Okinawan music boom has been overlooked. In this paper I present an overview of the activities of Japanese mainland musicians in their use of Okinawan musical material and, through an analysis of published interviews and writings by these musicians, I examine the cultural meanings that these musical expropriations have held. In addition, I argue that the activities of Okinawan musicians themselves have been greatly affected by mainland Japanese musicians, and that modern Okinawan music must be seen within a national musical context.

Keywords: cultural identity; Japan; music; musical style; Okinawa

On May 15, 1972, as part of an ongoing program to preserve and promote the traditional performing arts of the nation, the Japanese government designated the Okinawan traditional musical-drama genre *kumiodori* an Important Intangible Cultural Asset (*Jūyō mukei bunkazai*). The date of this designation, the first of its kind for an Okinawan performing arts genre, was of huge significance, coinciding to the day with the return of Okinawa to Japanese government after a period of some 27 years of American administration in the aftermath of World War II. The new status of *kumiodori* as a 'national' genre, recognized and supported by the Japanese government, was a statement that, for better or for worse, Okinawa was

once again a part of Japan and, by association, Okinawan performing arts were now a sub-genre of the Japanese performing arts.

Not coincidentally, the early 1970s saw a blossoming of interest in the music of Okinawa among mainland¹ Japanese musicians and listeners. While the culture department of the Japanese government was interested principally in the 'classical' arts of the old Ryūkyūan² court in Shuri,³ mainland Japanese musicians and audiences were particularly taken with the thriving Okinawan folk music (*min'yō*) scene represented by musicians such as Kadekaru Rinshō (1920–1999) and Noborikawa Seijin (b. 1930), and also with the attempts of the musician Kina Shōkichi (b. 1948) and others to fuse this traditional music with a modern rock sound through the use of electric guitars and the rock drum kit. Shortly after this initial influx of Okinawan performers onto the Japanese music scene, Japanese musicians themselves began to incorporate Okinawan elements in their own music, and artists such as Kubota Makoto (b. 1949) and Hosono Haruomi (b. 1947) were influential in the mid-1970s in introducing an awareness of Okinawan music to Japanese audiences through their use of Okinawan songs, scales, and rhythms. After something of a lull in the 1980s, the Okinawan music scene in mainland Japan suddenly came alive again in the early 1990s with the appearance of bands such as the Nēnēs,⁴ Rinken band, and the return of Kina Shōkichi to regular performance there. Again, a substantial element of this modern Okinawan boom has involved the active participation not only of Okinawan artists, but of mainland Japanese musicians, promoters, producers, and record companies. In 1993 the

1. Throughout this paper I use the term 'mainland Japan', consisting of the four biggest Japanese islands, Honshū, Kyūshū, Shikoku and Hokkaidō. This term corresponds to several terms commonly used within Okinawa to refer to these four islands, including *Nihon hondo*, *Yamato* and *Naichi*. The last two of these terms, in particular, have connotations of the cultural differences between Okinawa prefecture and the rest of Japan.

2. Modern-day Okinawa prefecture, along with the Amami islands in Kagoshima prefecture, existed until 1879 as the autonomous Ryūkyū Kingdom. The word Ryūkyū is currently used as the name for the geographical area comprised by the islands from Amami down to the end of Okinawa prefecture, and also to describe the culture and customs of this region.

3. Ryūkyūan classical music was designated an Important Intangible Cultural Asset in 2000, with designations for *kumiodori* drumming in 2003, *kumiodori sanshin* in 2005, and *kumiodori tachikata* (dance and acting) in 2006. Since 1976, several Okinawan festivals such as Tarama island's Harvest Festival, which incorporate traditional music and dance, have also been designated as Important Intangible Folk Cultural Assets (*jūyō mukei minzoku bunkazai*).

4. Sometimes transliterated as 'Nēnēzu'. I use 'Nēnēs' here as it is widely used on the band's publicity and CD jackets. Throughout the text, wherever a band or writer has an established romanized name then I have used that. In several cases I have also preserved the specific use of upper-case letters—the band name 'BEGIN', for example, is usually written thus, as is Sakamoto Ryūichi's 1987 album *NEO GEO*. In other cases I follow the revised Hepburn system of romanization.

Japanese band The Boom had a massive nationwide hit with the Okinawa-inspired song 'Shimauta', which has become a standard throughout Japan, and is known, in cover versions, through much of Asia and the world. Many other mainland Japanese artists such as the Southern All Stars and Sakamoto Ryūichi (b. 1952) have all been influential on Okinawan music both inside and outside Okinawa itself. In addition, the mainland Japanese entertainment industry has been hugely influential in the production of an Okinawan cultural identity both inside and outside Okinawa.

Nevertheless, the huge popularity of Okinawan music in the Japanese mainland, and its use by mainland Japanese musicians, has been accompanied by a vigorous discourse concerning issues of identity, authenticity and Okinawa's place in the Japanese nation. Is Okinawan music, as the 1972 cultural asset designations would have us believe, really a genre of Japanese music? What problems and barriers do Japanese mainland performers face in entering the world of traditional Okinawan music? Conversely, what would traditional music in Okinawa be like without the support and participation of mainland Japanese performers and audiences?

In this paper I consider the place of Okinawan music in modern Japanese culture. In particular, I focus largely on performers with no immediate connection by birth to Okinawa, and examine some of the cultural dialogues that have arisen through their appropriation of what is, as we shall see, to some extent a 'foreign' genre. Nevertheless, I argue that the contributions of such musicians, and the dissemination of Okinawan music in mainland Japanese society, are an integral part of the Okinawan music scene, and are essential for understanding the recent popularity of Okinawan music throughout Japan.

Situating Okinawan music in Japan

There have been several recent studies in English and Japanese emphasizing the marginal and ambivalent position that Okinawa holds in the context of Japan as a country (Hein and Selden 2003; Hook and Siddle 2003; Teruya 2003). Of course, there is also a growing literature emphasizing the multicultural nature of mainland Japan itself (Denoon *et al.* 1996; Lie 2001) and, to some extent, the recent interest in Okinawa can be seen as a more general trend towards a reassessment of outdated *Nihonjinron* theories of Japanese cultural uniformity (see e.g. Sugimoto and Mouer 1989; Sugimoto 1997).

On a musical level too, musical styles in Japan continue to exhibit strong regional affiliations, such as the various *biwa* traditions of the western island of Kyūshū (e.g. de Ferranti 2008), the Tsugaru *shamisen* tradition of northern Japan (Johnson 2006) or the Pacific island of Ogasawara (Johnson 2004). In a study of the Tsugaru

shamisen genre of northern Japan, Johnson has written that, 'on different levels within Japan, Ryūkyūans and Ainu alike, just like many people from Tsugaru and elsewhere, might be considered a type of other within Japan' (2006: 80). There are certainly many similarities between Okinawa and regions like Tsugaru, geographical dislocation from the power centres of Kantō and Kansai being one. Yet there seems to be a discernible difference in the level of cultural dislocation from mainland Japanese society of Okinawa compared to, for example, Tsugaru. One recent publication, chronicling the lives of mainland Japanese who have moved to live in Okinawa, is full of descriptions of Okinawa as a 'foreign country where you can speak Japanese' (Kyūjin Okinawa 2004: 89) or as the 'least Japanese place in Japan' (Kyūjin Okinawa 2004: 30). Furthermore, Okinawa's political removal from the Japanese state between 1945 and 1972, and the relatively recent existence of a monarch (until 1879), give the islands a degree of cultural separation from the mainland that cannot really be seen in any other Japanese region except, possibly, the Ainu population of Hokkaidō.

The musical dislocation of Okinawa in a Japanese context can be seen well in the realm of the national *min'yō* world, where the canon of 'Japanese' folk songs originates from every prefecture in Japan—except Okinawa. A typical 'Japanese' folk singer, regardless of their place of birth, generally has a repertory of songs originating from Hokkaidō down to Kyūshū, but it would be quite unusual for him/her to perform songs from Okinawa (Hughes 2008: 282–5). Similarly, it is unusual for Okinawan musicians to perform folk songs of the Japanese mainland.⁵ Statements such as that by the Japanese musician Sakamoto Ryūichi that 'I don't think of Okinawan music as a kind of Japanese music' (Sakamoto 1993: 442) are common (though by no means universal) among Okinawans and mainland Japanese alike, in a way that is not found in other regions of Japan. To give another example, *Hōgaku Jānaru*,⁶ the leading monthly publication devoted to traditional Japanese music, has frequent articles on *Tsugaru shamisen*—indicating the genre's acceptance as a 'Japanese' music genre—while articles on Okinawan music are relatively rare.

5. Rare exceptions include Kina Shōkichi's use of the song 'Sōran bushi', or Noborikawa Seijin's 'Ohara bushi', and several items performed by the singer Nagama Takao. Amami represents a borderline case: many Amami singers are affiliated to mainland Japanese organizations such as the Nihon Min'yō Kyōkai, but most do not have a substantial repertory of mainland Japanese songs, and perform almost exclusively songs originating in Amami. It is also true that performers from Okinawa (Miyara Kōsei) and Amami (Tsukiji Shunzō) have had success in mainland Japanese *min'yō* competitions. My point here is that the mainland Japanese and the Okinawan folk song repertories are seen as two separate entities, a situation which has no parallels for any other Japanese prefectures. See also Hughes 2008: 282–5.

6. *Hōgaku Journal*.

The role of 1990s Okinawan pop music in the construction of an Okinawan identity has been described in detail by Roberson, who describes music as 'a set of sites (both sounds and sights) through which contemporary Okinawan identities are constructed, reflected, and set in contrast to—and sometimes in resistance against—powerful national and international forces' (Roberson 2001: 213). Johnson, in his (2001) study of the Nēnēs, describes how the music of this band exists in multiple contexts and represents various local and national identities. This view is certainly valid, in so far as these bands exist in an Okinawan cultural sphere. Both of these studies present the Okinawan music boom of the 1990s, personified by groups such as the Nēnēs, as an essentially Okinawan phenomenon that managed to find success in mainland Japan. Yet, as Takahashi (2006) has observed, rather than being Okinawan bands who happened to find success in the Japanese market, acts such as the Nēnēs were, from the beginning, created with Japanese audiences in mind (Takahashi refers to the Nēnēs as *soto-muki*—directed outward, i.e. towards Japan). For example, a large part of the Nēnēs' early sound can be attributed to the arranger Sahara Kazuki (b. 1958 in Fukuoka), who was chosen for his credentials in the world music field (China 2006: 219). In this paper I take the view that Okinawan music, especially that of the 1990s Okinawa boom, is not only a product of an Okinawan society in the general context of Japan and the world, but that Okinawan music has been actively produced and influenced by Japanese musical society as a whole, and that an understanding of Okinawan music can only be obtained through a consideration of the activities of Japanese mainland musicians and audiences. Okinawan music, especially in the 1990s, has developed through active interchange with Japanese performers, arrangers and producers, and has been produced largely in the context of Okinawa as it exists in the minds of mainland Japanese audiences.

Okinawan influences in Japanese popular music

The mainland Japanese interest in, and appropriation of, Okinawan music stretches back at least to the beginning of the twentieth century. An early example can be found in 1911, when the Japanese composer Sonoyama Tamihei (1877–1955) published a set of piano variations on the Okinawan song 'Nubui Kuduchi', which he had heard during a two-year teaching assignment in Okinawa (Mishima 2008 a and b). Sonoyama, a native of Shimane prefecture in the west of Japan's main island, had been influenced by European composers such as Grieg, and their use of folk music in their own compositions and his use of an Okinawan song can be seen as an extension of this movement. Tellingly, the publicity for the release of this score stated that '*Kuduchi* is now not only an Okinawan song, but can be seen as a representative part of Japanese folk music' (Mishima 2008a). From this

early example, we can see, first, an attempt to situate Okinawa culturally within a Japanese framework. At the same time, the explicit stating of this attempt within the publicity for the work can perhaps be seen as evidence of the foreignness or exoticness of Okinawan music in Japan at the time.

A somewhat similar example can be seen in the commissioning in 1934 of a modern 'national' version of the Okinawan folk song 'Asadoya yunta' by the Japanese Nippon Columbia record company, an act that can be explained as a way of culturally positioning Okinawa within the Japanese cultural sphere (Gillan 2008: 49–50). Even the pre-war activities of leading pre-war Okinawan musicians such as Fukuhara Chōki (1903–81), while operating mainly within an Okinawan diaspora in mainland Japan, must be seen within the larger context of the activities of Japanese popular musicians such as Nakayama Shinpei (1887–1952) and Koga Masao (1904–1978)⁷ (cf. Kumada 2005: 150).

Two well-known songs to appear on the post-war Japanese popular music scene—Tabata Yoshio's (b. 1919) 'Shima sodachi' (1962), and Misawa Akemi's (b. 1945) 'Shima no Burūsu'⁸ (1963, written by the Okinawa-born Toguchi Masanobu [1916–98])—both took Amami ōshima, the largest of the Amami island group in the north of the Ryūkyū islands, as their theme, and introduced elements of Amami dialect and music into their modern arrangements. The Amami islands, like Okinawa with which they share many cultural traits, had been governed by the American military in the immediate post-war years as part of the Ryūkyū region, but had been returned to Japan in 1953, and in this sense were perhaps able to exert a cultural influence on mainland Japanese culture more easily than the American-ruled Okinawan islands (for an analysis of the music of Amami see Hayward and Kuwahara 2008). Nevertheless, these early pop songs, as a way of implanting an 'exotic' image of the southern islands into the Japanese cultural world,⁹ were a precursor for the influence that Okinawa was to have on mainland Japanese popular music in years to come. Tabata, a veteran performer in the Japanese popular music world, has made repeated use of Okinawan material since his 1962 hit. His 1975 release 'Jūku no haru', an *enka*-styled version of a song he had heard by chance during a performance trip to Okinawa¹⁰ (see Kawai 2007: 213–28) is still well known throughout Japan. Tabata returned to Okinawan material yet again in 1995 with a CD of Okinawan songs entitled *Shimauta*, and once more in 2003 (at the age of 84) with a follow-up CD release *Shimauta 2*.

7. Nakayama Shinpei (1887–1952) and Koga Masao (1904–1978) were two of the best known composers of *ryūkōka* (popular songs) in pre-World War II Japan.

8. Blues.

9. Kumada (2005: 154) identifies what he calls a 'Southern island exoticism' in these songs.

10. This song exists in various versions around Okinawa and Amami. The first recorded version was by the Yonaguni-born Mototake Yūsuke in 1972.

Another early musical landmark was the release of the song 'Satōkibi-batake' in 1967. Composed by the Tōkyō-born Terashima Naohiko (1930–2004), this song is particularly important as an early example of a lyric dealing with the American invasion of Okinawa in 1945, a theme that would later be used by artists such as The Boom and Southern All Stars.

<i>Zawawa zawawa zawawa hiroi satōkibi batake wa</i>	<i>Zawawa</i> , The wind passes through
<i>Zawawa zawawa zawawa kaze ga tōrinukeru dake</i>	the large sugar cane field
<i>Kyō mo miwatasu kagiri ni</i>	looking at it today
<i>Midori no nami ga uneru</i>	the green waves undulate
<i>Natsu no hizashi no naka de</i>	in the summer sun
<i>Mukashi umi no mukō kara</i>	A long time ago from across the sea
<i>Ikusa ga yatte kita</i>	came a battle
<i>Natsu no hizashi no naka de</i>	in the summer sun

(Words and music: Terashima Naohiko)

Satōkibi-batake is a central part of the Okinawa-Japan musical canon, having been performed by countless singers, perhaps most famously Moriyama Ryōko (b. 1948) in 1997, and is a favourite on Okinawa music CD collections aimed at the tourist market. While the song has little in common with traditional Okinawan musical genres (Kitanaka 1998: 47), it has remained popular in Japan and, especially after Moriyama's collaboration with the Okinawan band BEGIN, in Okinawa.

In addition to these early attempts by mainland Japanese musicians at incorporating Okinawan themes into their work, the early 1970s saw the beginnings of a movement to promote Okinawan musicians in the Japanese mainland. In 1969 the Japanese writer Takenaka Rō (1930–91) first visited Okinawa, forming a personal fascination that was to have important repercussions for Okinawan music in mainland Japan. Takenaka was particularly taken with the improvised and earthy nature of Okinawan *min'yō*, particularly in the case of singers such as Kadekaru Rinshō, and which Takenaka regarded as having been lost from Japanese *min'yō* through decontextualization. Takenaka set about introducing this music to a mainland Japanese audience through his writings, through record production (he was responsible for producing over 40 LP records of Okinawan music) and, perhaps most importantly, through arranging performance opportunities for Okinawan musicians in Japan. In 1973 Takenaka had brought the singer Kadekaru Rinshō to Tōkyō to perform with great success, and in 1974 and 1975 he organized the now legendary Ryūkyū festivals in Tōkyō, Osaka and Kyoto.¹¹ These

11. Some of the tapes from these festivals are now available on CD.

festivals featured all the big names in traditional Okinawan music—Kadokaru, Yamazato Yūkichi, China Sadao, Daiku Tetsuhiro, Ōshir Misako. The recordings of these artists that Takenaka made for the Victor label at this time have become classics that continue to sell well in CD reissue versions. Takenaka's importance in promoting Okinawan music to a Japanese audience has been attested to by several major recording artists. China Sadao (b. 1945), for instance, has written that 'the fact that Okinawa[n music] has had so much attention in Japan up to now all started with Takenaka Rō' (China 2006: 144). The Ryūkyū festival format was revived at the height of the Okinawan music boom in 1995 and continues to date as an annual event in Osaka featuring veterans of the Okinawan music scene and younger performers alike.

The early 1970s saw the beginnings of a movement by mainland musicians to interpret the music of Okinawa in the context of their own music. In 1974, during a stop-over in Hawaii on the way back to Japan from a trip to the USA, the Kyoto-born musician Kubota Makoto was taken by the mixture of Chinese and Japanese influences in the island, and set out on a quest to define a 'modern Asian musical style' (Kubota 2006: 109). This new-found interest in 'Asian' music led Kubota initially to Okinawa, where by chance he heard Kina Shōkichi's song 'Haisai ojisan', which had been included on a 1969 album of Shōkichi's father Kina Shōei (Kubota 2006: 140–4). This chance encounter prompted Kubota to record a cover version of the song in 1975 on his album *Hawaii Chanpurū*,¹² a version which introduced the song to mainstream Japanese audiences for the first time. Kubota went on to be hugely influential in Kina Shōkichi's early career, producing his 1977 debut album, and his 1980 album *Bloodline*, on which he also arranged for the American guitarist Ry Cooder to play. Kubota's initial trip to Okinawa also seems to have been the impetus for the interest of other Japanese musicians such as Hosono Haruomi in Okinawan music, and the fact that Okinawan music was little known among Japanese musicians at this time can be seen from Kubota's comment that '[when I first gave Kina Shōkichi's record to my musician friends] nobody got it at all—the only one who showed any reaction was Hosono' (Kubota 2006: 142; Tasaki 1999: 6). Hosono's 1976 album *Hōan Yōkō* contained the Okinawan-influenced songs 'Roochoo Gumbo' and 'Chōchō san', on which Hosono is joined by a group of Okinawan backing singers,¹³ and on which Hosono himself plays an Okinawan *sanshin*.¹⁴ Roochoo Gumbo, while relying heavily on a 'Dr John-style New Orleans piano riff' (Hosokawa 1999b: 135),

12. *Chanpurū* means a 'mixture' in the Okinawa dialect, and is also the name of a popular Okinawan stir-fried dish.

13. Credited only as 'Kawada Ryūkyū Buyō-dan' (Kawada Ryūkyū dance troupe). Other singers on the album are credited individually.

14. A three-stringed long necked lute, with a resonating membrane of snake skin.

also uses a predominantly Okinawan scale¹⁵ in the vocal line. The Okinawan lyrics of the female vocalists, 'Yamato people will be blown away, they can't beat the Southern wind' (Hosokawa 1999b: 135) place the Okinawan islands in cultural opposition to mainland Japan, commonly referred to by Okinawans as 'Yamato'. The song's musical quotation of *Haisai Ojisan* is presumably influenced equally by Kubota's 1975 version as by Kina Shōkichi's original.¹⁶ In 1978 Hosono further increased the presence of Okinawan music in Japanese mainland musical culture with a version of the well-known 'Asadoya'¹⁷ yunta' on his album *Paraiso*, and in 1980 appeared as a guest on Kina Shōkichi's *Bloodline* album.

The 1990s and beyond

After a lull in interest in Okinawan music during most of the next decade, towards the end of the 1980s the Japanese music industry, inspired by changing musical tastes in Europe and America, began to experience the growth of a new genre which came to be known in Japanese, as in English, as 'World Music' (*wārudo myūjikkū*¹⁸).

Inspired by this 'world music' movement, a number of Japanese musicians started to follow up on Kubota and Hosono's 1970s experiments with Okinawan music. Sakamoto Ryūichi, Hosono's partner in the influential Yellow Magic Orchestra, included a 3-piece Okinawan female chorus group in his albums *NEO GEO* (1987) and *Beauty* (1989), a line-up he also included on his 1989 world tour. On these 2 albums, Sakamoto includes the Okinawan standards *Chinnuku Jūshi*, *Asadoya yunta*, and *Tinsagu nu hana* in intricate rock/pop arrangements. The title track of the *NEO GEO* album is also composed around the Okinawan lullabies 'Mimi chiri bōzu' and 'Akata sundunchi', into which Sakamoto incorporates Balinese *kecak*¹⁹ chanting and a funk bass line provided by the American musician Bootsy Collins. On other songs the Okinawan singers provide 'Okinawan-style' backing vocals interspersed into music with no specific Okinawan connection. In this way, the Okinawan singers on these two albums perform their standard traditional repertory more-or-less unchanged, and innovation is achieved through Sakamoto's weaving of this 'raw material'²⁰ into the overall textures of his com-

15. Do mi fa so ti do. Also known as the 'Ryūkyū' scale.

16. The song was also recorded around this time by the Osakan radio presenter Nakamura Eiichi.

17. The album notes list the song as 'Asatoya yunta'.

18. In some Japanese record shops Okinawan music is found in the world music section.

19. Highly rhythmical Balinese musical drama performed by a large group of (usually male) vocalists.

20. Ogawa (1995: 159–61) describes Sakamoto as using Okinawa music as a 'raw material' (*sozai*).

positions. Sakamoto's experiments were to prove particularly influential for the Okinawan music boom of the 1990s. In particular, the experience of performing Okinawan music abroad in its new 'world music' format prompted one of Sakamoto's backing singers, Koja Misako (b. 1954), on returning to Okinawa after the world tour, to approach the musician China Sadao with a view to setting up a band to perform music in a similar style (China 2006: 218–22). The resulting band, the Nēnēs, was the most famous and successful of the 1990s Okinawan bands in a Japanese context.

Shortly after Sakamoto's Okinawan experiments, another young mainland Japanese band, The Boom, also began to turn towards Okinawa. Having started out in 1986 performing music with a ska-influenced rock sound, The Boom began to experiment with Okinawan elements around 1990 on their third album *Japaneska*. As the title suggests, and as Miyazawa Kazufumi (b. 1966), the band's lead singer, has stated, the band members were anxious to produce an indigenous sound 'that couldn't be made by a Western musician' (Miyazawa 2005: 4) and on this album they started experimenting with (mainland) Japanese instruments, and on the song 'Hyakuman tsubu no namida' (A million tears) made use of the Okinawan musical scale. In an effort to produce an image of the 'original Japan', the photos for the jacket were taken in the Okinawan countryside, providing the band with their first trip to the islands.

The Boom's association with Okinawan music, however, is best exemplified by their most famous song 'Shimauta'. This song had originally appeared as part of the band's 1992 album *Shishunki*, and was subsequently released in Okinawa in an Okinawan language version at the end of that year. The song received airplay through its use in a commercial for a local awamori liquor company, and achieved good sales of over 10,000 in Okinawa. The nationwide release of the standard Japanese version in June 1993 was an unprecedented success, selling 1.5 million copies, and making the song an emblem of Okinawa throughout Japan.

<i>Deigo no hana ga saki</i>	Just when the hibiscus flowers were in bloom
<i>Kaze o yobi arashi ga kita</i>	they summoned the wind, and a great storm came

(Words and music: Miyazawa Kazufumi)

The well-known lyrics depict the destruction caused by the American invasion of Okinawa in 1945 and were inspired by a visit Miyazawa made to the Himeyuri Peace Museum in the south of Okinawa where the invasion was particularly severe (Miyazawa 2005: 4). The lyrics, with their juxtaposition of images of Okinawan nature, the wind, and the American invasion of the islands, bear an obvious resemblance to Terashima's *Satōkibi-batake*. The theme has appeared several times in 'Okinawan' music by Japanese mainland performers, and can

be seen as a central theme in discourse surrounding Okinawa's cultural position in Japan. Besides Terashima's 1967 example, The Southern All Stars, one of the most prominent Japanese rock bands of recent years, have made use of Okinawan imagery in their anti-war songs 'Nachikasanu koiuta' (1990) and 'Heiwa no Ryūka' (1996). The first of these describes, in the first person, the mourning of a woman for her lover who never returned home after the fighting, while the second takes a more direct approach, criticizing the continued presence of American bases on the island:

<i>Kono kuni ga heiwa dato dare ga kimeta no?</i>	Who decided that this country is at peace?
<i>Hito no namida mo kawakanu uchi ni</i>	Before the tears of the people are dry
<i>Amerika no kasa no shita yume mo mimashita</i>	Beneath the American umbrella we had a dream
<i>Tami o misuteta sensō no hate ni</i>	At the edge of the war that killed so many

(Words and music: Kuwata Keisuke [b. 1956, Kanagawa])

Of course, the events of World War II have featured to some extent in post-war Okinawan 'new folk songs' such as 'Yaka bushi', 'Himeyuri no uta' [The lily song], or 'Kanpō nu kwē nukusā' [The leftovers after the bombardment]. The last of these, composed around 1969 by Higa Kōbin, an Okinawan who had spent World War II in Osaka, but had lost several family members during the war, is a highly personal account of the loss and destruction caused by the American invasion. Nevertheless, the use of anti-war imagery in such a large proportion of the (relatively small number of) 'Okinawan' songs by mainland Japanese musicians underlines the cultural position of Okinawa within the Japanese nation as an anti-war symbol. More importantly, the anti-war 'voice' of these Japanese musicians has arguably filtered through to the Okinawan level, and has been used extensively in recent works by Okinawan musicians such as Mongol 800.

While groups such as The Boom and the Southern All Stars have had considerable artistic and commercial success with their Okinawan music experiments, and are widely known throughout Japan, the interest in Okinawan music in the Japanese mainland has also been seen in the work of several less well-known, yet still culturally influential performers. One such example is the *Shīsars*,²¹ a Tōkyō-based duo formed in 1987 by Yasuba Jun and Mochida Akemi. This duo has done extensive fieldwork with Okinawan musicians, and both performers have a deep knowledge of Okinawan music. Nevertheless, their recorded output has been notable for its innovative approach to largely traditional material.

The Kansai-based band Soul Flower Union, and its offshoot Soul Flower Mononoke summit, have also been influential in introducing Okinawan music

21. Like 'Nēnēs' (see note 4 above), this romanized spelling is widely used by the band themselves.

to more specialist Japanese audiences. The band, led by Nakagawa Takashi, have incorporated a variety of 'minority' elements into their performances, including songs of Ainu, Korean, and Okinawan origin. Nakagawa's use of the Okinawan *sanshin* has also been a feature of much of the group's output. They have been directly involved with Okinawan musicians such as Noborikawa Seijin, with whom they released a CD in 2001. I consider some of the aspects of the use of Okinawan material by Nakagawa and Mochida in the next section.

Discourses of performance

In the previous section I outlined some examples of the use of Okinawan music, or musical elements, in the work of Japanese pop musicians and producers. In this section I explore some of the cultural meanings that these musical appropriations have had for the artists themselves, and examine some of the cultural dialogues that have taken place in the form of interviews and writings by the musicians concerned.

One of the attractions for many mainland Japanese musicians performing Okinawan music has been the opportunity to be both 'international' in a Japanese context, and 'Japanese' in an international context. Sakamoto Ryūichi, commenting on his 1987 album, says:

When I made the album NEO GEO I felt as if we'd captured something that went beyond just regionality. Looking from Japan, the nearest foreign country or 'different' country is Okinawa. When I wanted to get away from the Japanese 'closed-mindedness', I found Okinawa where there is a great mixture of things from different cultures. Okinawa is really international... (Sakamoto 1993: 441).

While Currid has suggested that the Okinawan voices in Sakamoto's music of this period 'stand in...unproblematically for "Japanese"' (Currid 1996: 94–5), Sakamoto's comments above make it clear that he himself sees Okinawa largely as a foreign country.

Ogawa (1995) has noted the role of Okinawa as a 'gateway to Asia' for Japanese musicians, and other publications confirm the view within the Japanese mainland of musicians performing in an Okinawan style as 'Asian'. Ohsuga's (1993) book *Asian Pop Music (Eijian poppu myūjikkū)*, for example, lists 13 representative 'Japanese' musicians or groups, four of whom—Rinken band, Kina Shōkichi and Champloose, Nēnēs, Ara Yukito—are from Okinawa, along with Sakamoto Ryūichi, Hosono Haruomi and Kubota Makoto, all of whom have had a long association with Okinawan music. Ogawa also notes that the Japanese band The Boom's forays into Okinawan music provided them with the 'ethnic' credentials to participate in a pan-Asian pop opera written by the Singapore-based musi-

cian Dick Lee in 1992, that they wouldn't have had simply by being a Japanese rock band (Ogawa 1995: 169; see also Kawamura 1993: 124–30 for a discussion between Miyazawa and Lee on various aspects of Asian pop music). Indeed, for Miyazawa and other artists, Okinawan music isn't simply a gateway to Asia, but to the wider world in general. As he commented in a 1999 interview, 'ever since I got interested in Okinawa I've moved away from the electric sound to a belief in "primitive" (*purimitibu*) rhythms and the power of human performance, a belief which finally led me to Brasil'²² (Tomita 1999: 6). In other words, Okinawa was Miyazawa's gateway to world music in general, and also to what he sees as a more 'human' or 'primitive' approach to music-making.

This idea of Okinawan music as a 'primitive cultural other' within the Japanese cultural sphere is one which crops up again and again in discourse surrounding Okinawa. One of the biggest attractions of Okinawa for Japanese mainland musicians, both professional and amateur, has been the sense that traditional music survives as a part of everyday life—as a living tradition. Mochida Akemi, one of the leading forces behind the Japanese band The Shisars, noted that:

The starting point for me was not so much that I wanted to play Okinawan music itself, but that I wanted to explore the way that songs [in general] 'originally existed' [honrai no arikata]. I'm not particularly interested in just using Okinawan scales or Okinawan rhythms (De Musik Inter 1998: 132).

Like Miyazawa, Mochida's interest in Okinawa seems to be driven by the impetus to get away from the modern industrial world to a more natural style of music-making. The idea ties in to some extent with Taylor's idea of 'Authenticity as Primality' for consumers of world music in the west, where this music has 'some discernible connection to the timeless, the ancient, the primal, the pure, the chthonic' (Taylor 1997: 26–7).²³

While Mochida expresses a disinterest in the use of Okinawa musical styles, one of the striking factors of the 'Okinawan' music of The Boom and the Southern All Stars has been the use of the Okinawan scale. The Boom's 'Okinawan' songs 'Hyakuman tsubu no namida', 'Shimauta, i anbe', and 'Okinawa ni furu yuki', as well as both 'Nachikasanu koiuta' and 'Heiwa no ryūka', all use a predominantly Okinawan scale in the vocal melody. The use of the Okinawan scale, and the cultural associations that this use carries can, in some cases, be quite specific.

22. Miyaza's solo projects have incorporated extensive Brazilian elements. He recorded his 1998 album *Afrosick* in Brazil. Miyazawa's comments partly echo Sakamoto Ryūichi's statement (quoted in Currid 1996) that 'finally I reach to Africa'.

23. It would be unfair, I think, to infer from these comments that there is any feeling of cultural superiority on the part of these particular musicians, most of whom appear to have a genuine love of and respect for Okinawan culture.

Miyazawa, for instance, has commented on his mixing of the Okinawan scale and another (predominantly anhemitonic pentatonic²⁴) scale in the song 'Shimauta':

My doubts about the horrifying group suicides and military education [that took place in Okinawa before and after the war] were sung to the second melody. This part was concerned with the oppression of Okinawa by the Japanese mainland, and I couldn't bring myself to use the Okinawan scale. But then the Okinawan scale returns in the chorus (Miyazawa 2005: 4–5).

This extensive use of Okinawan scales by Japanese musicians in the 1990s contrasts with many Okinawan musicians who have explicitly steered clear of using the scale in their new music experiments (see Gillan 2008: 61). While bands such as the Nēnēs and especially Rinken Band have used the Okinawan scale to some extent, they have also made extensive use of other scales and harmonic devices.

One commonly expressed attitude has been that Okinawan music is in some way out of bounds for mainland Japanese musicians. The Boom's Miyazawa Kazufumi has commented that:

Until we recorded *Japaneska* I wasn't really sure whether it was OK for me to get involved with Okinawan music. I had a strong feeling that it was something that shouldn't be touched. In the past, some famous [mainland] artists²⁵ tried to incorporate Okinawan music and got severely criticized for it (in Kawamura 1993: 12).

Regarding his own musical experiments, Miyazawa has also (diplomatically) commented that 'it didn't go so far as criticism, but there were those who questioned why a mainlander was singing [Okinawan] music' (Tomita 1999: 7). Despite any inevitable negative comments, The Boom's song 'Shimauta', in particular, has been hugely popular both inside and outside Okinawa. Miyazawa has written (2005: 5) that the song's inclusion in one of the latest volumes of a widely used *kunkunshi*²⁶ notation published in Okinawa, and the implied acceptance within Okinawa as a 'real' Okinawan song, was a particular source of pride. Like 'Shimauta', the Southern All Stars' 'Heiwa no ryūka' has also partially made the jump to being a 'real' Okinawan song, with a cover version in 1997 by the Nēnēs, and inclusion in a number of Okinawan *kunkunshi* notations. The world-wide success of the song 'Shimauta', in particular, has been astonishing and has given its creator Miyazawa the status of an international star. In 2001 the

24. A five-note scale in which the intervals between adjacent pitches are all more than a semitone.

25. Presumably one or more of Kubota, Hosono and Sakamoto, the three main experimenters in Okinawan music up to that point.

26. An Okinawan tablature notation system for the *sanshin*. Originally adapted from the Chinese *gongche* notation system.

Argentine singer Alfredo Casero covered the song, a version that was to become the official song of the 2002 Argentine World Cup soccer team. The song has also been covered in China, Taiwan, and other south-east Asian countries where, in translated versions, it has mostly lost any connotations of being a Japanese or Okinawan song.

An important aspect of the activities of professional mainland pop musicians who have used Okinawan influences in their music is that there have been few overt attempts towards being 'authentic' to Okinawan traditions. This is as true for the early pioneers such as Kubota Makoto and Sakamoto Ryūichi as it is for more recent cases such as Nakagawa Takashi. Several authors have commented on the tendency for Japanese musicians when performing foreign genres to imitate as exactly as possible the 'correct' performance practices of the foreign culture (Atkins 2001, on jazz; Hosokawa 1999a, on salsa; Wade 2005: 138; Williams 2006 on Irish music). Whereas, with truly foreign genres such as salsa or jazz, there may be a need to maintain boundaries between 'ours' and 'theirs' (Hosokawa 1999a: 520), or an unwillingness to experiment, this doesn't seem to have been the case with Okinawan music. In relation to the use of Okinawan musical elements, Mochida Akemi has commented that:

We [mainland Japanese] don't have to be worried about issues of preservation, and we can basically do what we want. Nobody's going to accuse us of destroying tradition. I don't even think we are doing anything to destroy tradition. Anyway, tradition is not just about musical forms, it's about a whole way of thinking (De Musik Inter 1998: 140).

In fact, while Mochida and Yasuba Jun, her musical partner in the *Shīsars*, have adapted Okinawan musical elements quite freely on their recordings and in public performance, they have also been active in promoting more strictly traditional musical forms from around Okinawa,²⁷ and are both students of Okinawan classical music.²⁸ Nevertheless, especially for the early pioneers such as Hosono, Kubota and Sakamoto, most musicians have placed a strong emphasis on producing their own personal sound, as opposed to being faithful to traditional forms. As Hosono has said, 'Okinawa has a unique culture and history, but it's better not to think about that. When you play music it's more interesting not to have any strange preconceptions... If you think about it too academically it becomes a bit...' (Tasaki 1999: 6–7). Nakagawa, too, has commented that 'people always used to say that my [*sanshin*] playing was all over the place, but I said from the beginning that this is my own personal style' (De

27. And especially Okinoerabu island, a part of Kagoshima prefecture, in the north of the Ryūkyū island chain.

28. Mochida studies the Afuso lineage and Yasuba studies the Nomura lineage.

Musik Inter 1998: 138) and adds that 'I don't really like the term "tradition"' (De Musik Inter 1998: 141). Likewise, Sakamoto's attitude towards Okinawan music can be glimpsed through his statement that 'although I'm doing "Okinawa", I'm not doing Okinawan music itself' (Sakamoto 1993: 443). It should also be noted that Sakamoto has used elements from many Asian traditions in a highly innovative way, while Nakagawa has also adopted Ainu and Korean elements into his music, without any overt adherence to traditional performance practices, suggesting that the 'closeness' to Okinawan music extends to some extent to other Asian traditions.

The disconnection of many musicians from issues of authenticity has also been expressed as a distancing from expression of (Japanese or Okinawan) ethnicity. Sakamoto has stated, for example, that:

The worst thing is when people describe NEO GEO as ethnic [esuno] music. Ethnic glorification, saying the West is bad and Asia is good, is just discrimination—it's categorizing music in the same way as Orientalism (Sakamoto 1993: 337).

In other words, Sakamoto presents himself as using Okinawan music and musical ideas purely as musical 'material' (Ogawa 1995), rather than as any part of the expression of a cultural identity. Similarly, Nakagawa Takashi has complained that:

As far as I'm concerned I am making Rock 'n' Roll records, but the newspaper revues always go on about me incorporating Okinawan songs and Ainu songs and creating some distinctive 'indigenous' sound (De Musik Inter 1998: 132).

Despite this, for many artists, Okinawa has been one way of overcoming the barriers between tradition and innovation—of doing something new within an 'indigenous' framework. Speaking in 1993, Kubota Makoto commented that musicians coming from a traditional background and those coming from other backgrounds rarely collaborate, stating that 'even if you just try to mix a *shamisen* with rock music people will start complaining. In that sense, discovering 'Haisai ojisan' was such a liberation for me' (Ohsuga 1993: 205). The musical scene in Japan has changed considerably since the early 1990s with numerous experimental projects from 'traditional' musicians such as the *gagaku* performer Tōgi Hideki,²⁹ the Ainu musician Oki, and countless *Tsugaru jamisen* fusions. In part, at least, the path to these new musical projects was paved by artists such as Kubota, and ultimately back to Kina Shōkichi's 'Haisai ojisan'.

29. Born in 1959 into a lineage of *gagaku* performers, since 1996 Tōgi has focused on new compositions in a 'new-age' or 'healing' style.

Conclusions

In this paper I have examined some aspects of the use of Okinawan musical elements in the music of mainland Japanese musicians, from the early twentieth-century composition of Sonoyama Tamihei to the late twentieth and early twenty-first-century Okinawan music boom. One common feature of these musical experiments has been a need to define Okinawa's cultural position within Japan—seen as much through the explicit placing of 'Nubui kuduchi' as a 'Japanese' folk song, as through Sakamoto Ryūichi's denial of Okinawan music as a branch of Japanese music. Whatever the conclusions of individual performers may be, the use of music as one way of acting out identity issues concerning Okinawa's place in the Japan nation has undoubtedly been an important one. We have seen that the use of Okinawan music by mainland musicians has been accompanied by a vigorous discourse concerning issues of appropriateness, authenticity, and cultural meaning.

As Ogawa (1995), and Johnson (2001: 361) have pointed out, for mainland Japanese listeners, at least part of the attraction of Okinawa for mainland Japanese performers has been its image as a cultural 'other' within a native context. Ideas of 'primality' are present in several of the discourses surrounding the use of Okinawan musical traits. The idea that a certain, yet incomplete, cultural separation exists between Okinawa and the Japanese mainland has also been of prime importance as it has enabled performers to appropriate elements of Okinawan music in a modern context, without the cultural obligations to be faithful to tradition that some performers have felt with mainland Japanese traditions.

The Japanese interest in Okinawan music has also had an extremely important effect on the path which Okinawan music has taken within Okinawa itself. The success of Kina Shōkichi in the 1970s, for example, cannot really be understood without taking into account the activities of Japanese musicians such as Kubota Makoto and Hosono Haruomi, both in popularizing Okinawan music, and in popularizing Kina himself through the arranging of recording sessions. More recently, the importance of the mainland Japanese interest in 'world music' for the subsequent Okinawa boom cannot be underestimated, and has been cited by Teruya Rinken for the success of his Rinken Band in mainland Japan (Rinken and Matsumura 1995: 203). Despite Okinawa's image as an 'alchemical place of cultural plurality' (Hosokawa 1999b: 121; also see Hayward and Kuwahara 2008: 60), Teruya himself has described the difficulties he had in the early 1980s supporting himself as a musician in Okinawa and, in particular, a certain resistance within Okinawa to his efforts to mix Okinawan and pop styles—the band were booed, for example, at an Okinawan rock music festival in 1985 for being too Okinawan (Rinken and Matsumura 1995: 193–7). At least part of the impetus for

the creation of an Okinawan 'world music' style in the 1990s can be attributed to events that took place in the Tōkyō-based music industry. Seen from this point of view, it may be more accurate to say that, in addition to Okinawan popular music being used to construct Okinawan identities in contrast to Japan, the music is also used by mainland Japanese audiences as a way of negotiating Okinawa's cultural position within Japan.

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